

Kyle Porter, KARE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- St. Paul police officer David Longbehn was named 'Officer of the Year' by the Emerald Society Saturday.

Longbehn was in a tough situation May 1, 2010 during a carjacking case, when he confronted an armed man who had just ambushed and killed Maplewood Police Sgt. Joseph Bergeron.

"I'm very proud to be here and to receive this award. It means the world," Longbehn said.

Longbehn observed a man, 21-year-old Jason Jones, fitting the description of the possible carjacking suspect. When he asked Jones for identification, the man responded negatively and struck Longbehn in the face with a metal object. The officer suffered fractured bones. Injured and exhausted, Longbehn says when he tried shooting Jones, his gun malfunctioned because it was covered with blood. He said he quickly fixed it, and killed Jones. He credits years of training to be able to execute that quick thinking scenario.

"I remember getting to my feet thinking this situation has gone from bad to worse," Longbehn said. "I'm standing there confronting a suspect who killed Joe Bergeron. Now I'm with a gun that doesn't work. It's hard to believe a year has gone by. Life has changed for all of us involved. From the dispatchers, cops, command posts, and the Bergeron family."

Longbehn was joined by several law enforcement individuals from Minnesota. Congresswoman Betty McCollum and St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman also made the trip to D.C.

"When I heard it was Dave, my heart sank so deep into my chest I didn't think I would feel it again," Coleman said. "Dave isn't just a police officer, he's a friend and one of the best guys I've ever known."

In February, Longbehn received his own department's highest award, the Medal of Valor.

Longbehn grew up on the west side of St. Paul and joined the force in 1984. He said he wanted to become a police officer from the time he was a child.